

**WATCHUNG BOROUGH
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (WMAC)
2020 DEER POPULATION DENSITY SURVEY
RECOMMENDATION**

There have been 32 requests by the Watchung Police Department for deer carcass removals from the streets of Watchung Borough through the first 11 months of 2019 ending on November 30, 2019. This compares to 26 removals for the entire year of 2018, twenty three (23) removals for 2017 and twenty nine removals (29) for 2016. The 32 carcasses removed from the roads so far in 2019 also do not represent the entirety of the deer struck by vehicles. These results do not include the deer hit by vehicles that run into the woods to die. Drivers often do not report striking a deer. It should also be noted that deer/car collisions do not occur without personal injury. Although there were no reported injuries in 2018 in deer/car collisions, there have been 3 reported injuries so far in 2019 involving deer and there were 5 injuries in deer/car collisions in 2016.

To put the quantity of animals struck by vehicles into perspective, it is interesting to compare the number of deer killed on Watchung Borough streets to the size of the deer herd. Environmental Biologists with advanced scientific degrees generally advise that browsed woodlands like Watchung cannot support a deer herd in excess of 10 deer per square mile. In turn that would indicate Watchung's 6.2 square mile area cannot environmentally support a deer herd in excess of 62 animals.

Therefore, the rate of 32 deer killed so far this year in Watchung, appears to be a very high rate (50% or so) for an area capable of environmentally supporting a herd of around 60 animals. These results also do not appear to indicate there is any reduction in the deer herd size from previous years. The belief that the herd size was getting smaller, was advanced by several residents at past Council Meetings based on their observations, of sighting fewer deer in their back yards. It was also given as the basis for limiting the 2019-2020 Deer Management Program.

Given the uncertainty, among Watchung residents regarding the actual size of the deer herd, which was counted to be in excess of 500 deer in 2019 late winter, and the uncertainty whether or not the herd size is increasing or decreasing; the WMAC recommends that the Borough again undertake a Deer Herd Population Density Survey for 2020. In addition since the issues regarding the accuracy of the survey techniques and the accuracy of the results were questioned after the 2019 Survey, the Committee also recommends that two independent organizations be authorized to perform Aerial Drone Surveys.

The Committee would be happy to provide information to assist the Borough in selecting firms specializing in conducting Aerial Drone Surveys. Raritan Valley Community College and the Steward Green Organization, who performed last year's surveys, have expressed an interest in providing Watchung Borough proposals for performing surveys in 2020. Most members of the Committee were impressed by the competency and professionalism displayed in the way both firms performed their work, and know of no reason to not employ either firm in the future. Naturally the Borough should feel free to consider contracting with any qualified firm.

Recommended: Diana Canellis, Member
Paul Michaelis, Member
Heidi Rubino, Member
Richard Wellbrock, Member
Hans Juette, Chair

No Response Received: Ray Miller, Member

Date: 1/15/2020